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PAGE 01 CARACA 03348 01 OF 02 042008Z
ACTION ARA-01

INFO LOG-00 ACDA-08 ACDE-00 UTED-00 IM-01 TEDE-00 IO-00
ADS-00 DCP-01 OIC-02 NFAT-00 SAS-00 /013W
-----7DE433 042008Z /38

R 041958Z NOV 98
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2195
INFO USIA WASHDC 1909

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 003348

DEPT FOR ARA/AND

USIA FOR AR (SAMSON, PARKERSON)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: SOCI, SCUL, VE

SUBJECT: TRAVEL OF AMBASSADOR MAISTO TO MARACAIBO, OCT
23-25, 1998

1. SUMMARY. AMBASSADOR TRAVELED TO MARACAIBO TO ATTEND
THE INAUGURATION OF THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART OF
ZULIA AND THE CELEBRATION OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH
ANNIVERSARY OF THE BINATIONAL CENTER, THE CENTRO
VENEZOLANO-AMERICANO DEL ZULIA. ADDITIONALLY,
AMBASSADOR MET WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE VENEZUELAN-
AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND THE AMERICAN SCHOOL, TO
ADDRESS THEIR CONCERNS ABOUT SECURITY SURROUNDING

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PAGE 02 CARACA 03348 01 OF 02 042008Z
ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

MEETING WITH AGUN

2. THE ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATES OF NORTH AMERICAN
UNIVERSITIES (AGUN) HOSTED A BREAKFAST MEETING WITH
AMBASSADOR AND CAO. THE AMBASSADOR WELCOMED THE
INITIATIVE TO REVITALIZE THEIR ASSOCIATION AND INVITED
THEIR PARTICIPATION IN SUBMITTING CANDIDATES FOR THE
SEVERAL USIS SCHOLARSHIP AND INTERNATIONAL VISITOR
PROGRAMS. THE AGUN BOARD OF DIRECTORS REQUESTED GREATER
CONTACT WITH EMBOFFS, PARTICULARLY IN AGRICULTURE AND
COMMERCE.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ALAN H FLANIGAN
DATE/CASE ID: 08 JUN 2007 200504156

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INAUGURATION OF MACZUL

3. AMBASSADOR JOINED THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN ATTENDING THE INAUGURATION OF THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART OF ZULIA (MACZUL). PRESIDENT CALDERA WAS PRESENT AT THE INAUGURATION BUT DID NOT SPEAK. AT THE RECEPTION

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2

FOLLOWING, THE AMBASSADOR SPOKE TO LOCAL PRESS, STRESSING THAT THE USG SUPPORTS THE POLITICAL PROCESS IN VENEZUELA. HE MET WITH THE ACTING GOVERNOR OF ZULIA STATE, AND MAYORS OF MARACAIBO AND SAN FRANCISCO.

LUNCH WITH VENAMCHAM

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 CARACA 03348 01 OF 02 042008Z

4. THE VENEZUELAN-AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (VENAMCHAM, CHAIRPERSON FRANCISCO FERRER) HOSTED A LUNCH FOR AMBASSADOR. WHILE THERE WERE NO FORMAL REMARKS, QUESTIONS INVOLVED THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS AND THE CANDIDACY OF HUGO CHAVEZ. THE AMBASSADOR STRESSED THAT THE U.S. WILL ACCEPT THE DECISION OF THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL AND THAT VENEZUELA SHOULD CONTINUE ITS PROGRESS IN DECENTRALIZATION, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REFORM, AND THE FIGHT AGAINST CRIME, NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING, AND MONEY LAUNDERING. THE AMBASSADOR ASKED WHICH ISSUES ARE OF GREATEST INTEREST TO ZULIANOS NOW AND WAS TOLD THAT THEY ARE SECURITY, PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SERVICES.

MEETING WITH THE AMERICAN SCHOOL

5. AMBASSADOR MET WITH BOARD CHAIRMAN AND STAFF OF THE BELLA VISTA (AMERICAN) SCHOOL, WHERE, IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS, HE POINTED OUT THAT THE RECENT SPATE OF RUMORS ABOUT UNREST AND COUPS ARE UNSUSTAINABLE. IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION ABOUT EVACUATION, THE AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT THAT ALL EMBASSIES HAVE EMERGENCY PLANS AS A MATTER OF COURSE, AND THE CURRENT CONSULAR ACTIVITY OF UPDATING WARDEN LISTS WAS LIKEWISE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE. AMBASSADOR ASKED WHICH ARE THE ISSUES OF GREATEST IMPORTANCE IN ZULIA, AND WAS TOLD THEY WERE HEALTH, THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY, EDUCATION AND CORRUPTION.

CEVAZ ANNIVERSARY

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PAGE 04 CARACA 03348 01 OF 02 042008Z

6. THE CELEBRATION OF THE TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CENTRO VENEZOLANO-AMERICANO DEL ZULIA (CEVAZ) BEGAN WITH A MASS AND CHORAL CONCERT AT THE MERCEDES CHURCH AND THEN PROCEEDED ON TO THE CEVAZ AUDITORIUM. BESIDES THE AMBASSADOR, THE OTHER SPEAKER OF NOTE WAS ACTING GOVERNOR GIOVANNY VILLALOBOS. THE AMBASSADOR PARTICIPATED IN HONORING LONG-TERM EMPLOYEES.

EVALUATION OF TRIP

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3

7. THE T

RIP WAS EXTREMELY USEFUL IN SHOWING OFFICIAL AMERICAN INTEREST IN VENEZUELA'S SECOND CITY AND HIGHLIGHTED AREAS WHERE EMBOFFS CAN BE MORE ACTIVE. THE AMBASSADOR LEARNED THAT, GENERALLY SPEAKING, HEALTH AND SECURITY ISSUES ARE MORE IMMEDIATELY IMPORTANT TO ZULIANOS THAN VENEZUELA'S ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL

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PTQ0526

PAGE 01 CARACA 03348 02 OF 02 042008Z
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OIC-02 NFAT-00 SAS-00 /011W

-----7DE434 042008Z /38

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SITUATIONS PER SE. CONTROL OFFICER FOR TRIP WAS CAO
CARPER. MARACAIBO LOGISTICS WERE HANDLED BY CEVAZ.

MAISTO

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